

Customer No.: 31561
Application No.: 10/707,706
Docket No.: 9885-US-PA

REMARKS

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-7 are allowed. Applicants appreciate the allowance that the Examiner made to claims 1-7. While allowed claims 1-7 remain unchanged, the allowance made thereto is also solicited to be remained.

Discussion of Office Action Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action rejected claims 8-13 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art (AAPA) in view of Baseman et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,346,518).

In response to the rejection to claims 8-13 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's admitted prior art (AAPA) in view of Baseman et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,346,518), Applicants hereby otherwise traverse this rejection. As such, Applicant submits that claims 8-13 are now in condition for allowance.

With respect to claim 8, as originally filed, recites in part:

A cassette, comprising:

an outer casing with a front surface having a plurality of slots and two side surfaces having a plurality of holes ...

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a plurality of obstruction pieces positioned inside the outer casing to block the holes (Emphasis added).

Applicants submit that such a cassette as set forth in claim 8 is neither taught, disclosed, nor suggested by AAPA, Baseman or any of the other cited references, taken alone or in combination.

In the Office Action, the Examiner admitted that AAPA failed to disclose a plurality of obstruction pieces positioned inside the outer casing to block the holes. Then the Examiner cited Baseman et al. as a second reference to modify AAPA. However, Applicants submitted that AAPA and Baseman et al. '518, if combined, would not render the present invention, as set forth in claim 8, a *prima facie* case.

The Examiner alleged that Baseman et al. '518 taught the use of obstruction pieces (FIG. 15, 138) positioned in a hole of a surface of a cassette 40 (Paragraph 6 of the Office Action). Applicants disagree hereby. Actually, Baseman et al. '518 teaches a standard mechanic interface (SMIF) pod 40 has a cover 44, with an aperture 136 and a breather vapor removal element 138 located across the aperture 136 (FIG. 15; Column 18, lines 51-54). Baseman et al. '518 teaches that the cover 44 is a part of an enclosure to exclude external air and particulates, and particularly Baseman et al. '518 further teaches a frame (cassette) 48 with brackets 52 disposed inside the enclosure (FIGS. 2, and 6A-17; Column 7, lines 54-58). In addition, Baseman et al. '518 teaches that each wafer 12 spans a pair of brackets 52 at a respective site 50 in a stack 18 of wafers 12 (FIGS. 2 and Column 7, lines 58-59). It is noted that, the frame 48 with bracket 52 taught by

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Baseman et al. '518 is a kind of "cassette" used for storing wafers 12. In other words, the frame 48 is interpreted as a kind of "cassette" by one skilled artisan and a cover 44 of a SMIF pod 40 would not interpreted as an outer casing of a cassette. Therefore, Applicants submit that an outer casing of a cassette should not be confused with a cover of a SMIF pod. In order to draw a clear distinction between "SMIF pod" and "cassette", Examiner is invited to refer to column 3, lines 3-12 of U.S. Patent No. 4,532,970.

In re U.S. Patent No. 4,532,970, Tullis et al. disclosed that "*A SMIF box 90, which is used for transporting cassettes 80 from one piece of processing equipment 15 to another, interfaces with the canopy 10 via the SMIF port 20. ... The interface 110 also provides means to latch the box 90 to the port 20 so that the elevator mechanism 70 can freely transport the cassette 80 between the box 90 and the canopy 10.* The doors 60 and 100 are designed so that the majority of particles on the exterior surfaces of the doors 60 and 100 are trapped between the doors 60 and 100. Thus, the wafers carried in the cassette 80 are not contaminated when the interface 110 is opened". In re the description above mentioned, Applicant submit that "cassette" is a member used for holding wafers and the "*SMIF box 90*" is a member other than "cassette". Therefore, "cassette" should not been interpreted as "*SMIF box 90*" by one skilled in the art. In re prior art, such as U.S. Patent No. 4,532,970 and U.S. Patent No. 4,534,389, difference between "cassette" and "SMIF pod" is two kinds of well-known mechanical elements.

To sum up, Baseman et al. '518 teaches a cover 44 of a SMIF pod 40 rather than an outer casing of a cassette, as set forth in claim 8. Accordingly, the vapor removal element 138

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that is alleged to read on the obstruction pieces, as set forth in claim 8, is configured in a hole of a surface of an aperture of a cover of a SMIF pod, rather than a cassette. As taught by Baseman et al. '518, (FIGS. 2, and 6A-17). Thus, as discussed above, AAPA and Baseman et al., if combined, do not teach or suggest all claim limitations as set forth in claim 8, and cannot establish *prima facie* obviousness of the present invention as set forth in claim 8 (MPEP §2143.03).

Further, Applicants submit that AAPA and Baseman et al. '518 cannot be combined where they teach away from their combination. AAPA teaches that the cassette is set in a reaction chamber that is always maintained in a vacuum state through a vacuum exhaust system (Paragraph 0006). AAPA also teaches that the front surface 140 of the outer casing 102 of the cassette has a plurality of slots 100 for inserting substrates into and for retrieving substrates out of the cassette. Therefore, such a cassette as set forth in AAPA is not airtight itself. Furthermore, since the cassette as set forth in AAPA is set in a reaction chamber that is always maintained in a vacuum state, AAPA teaches away from being modified by Baseman et al. '518 to add a breather vapor removal element to the outer casing of the cassette, in order to exchange the internal air and external air of the cassette (MPEP §2141.02).

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For at least the reasons discussed above, claim 8 is submitted to be novel and unobvious over AAPA and Baseman et al. '518, and any of the other cited references, taken alone or in combination, and should be allowable.

If independent claim 8 is allowable over the prior art of record, then its dependent claims 9-13 are allowable as a matter of law, because these dependent claims contain all features of their respective independent claim 8. *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

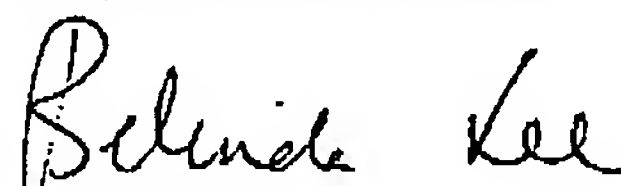
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CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is believed that the pending claims 1-13 are in proper condition for allowance and an action to such effect is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite the examination of the above-identified patent application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned.

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Respectfully submitted,


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